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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed directors of licensed and license-exempt early childhood programs in Illinois. Participating were 840 directors who responded to a mailed survey sent to 2,325 directors. Respondents were predominantly white (89 percent), with directors of color representing 11 percent of the sample. Results indicated that the majority of directors felt unprepared when they first assumed administrative positions. They indicated that on-the-job training contributed most to their current level of knowledge and skill. Directors reported that their greatest satisfaction was running a quality program, working with children or parents, and helping others. The greatest frustrations were with staffing issues, individual staff, parents, and lack of funds, time, and poor staff compensation. Mechanisms of support cited as helpful included networking and newsletters. Most believed that a professional organization focusing on directors' needs was needed. Ninety-one percent perceived benefits to developing an Illinois Director Credential. Focus group interviews with 38 directors were held to increase the sample of directors of color and Head Start directors (47% African American, 16% Hispanic, 8% Indian and 29% white). The focus group results indicated that directors were disappointed about the lack of training when they first became administrators. Networking and pooling of resources was named as the greatest resource for directors. They identified a need to be connected to the broader early childhood community. (Appendices include data collection instruments and a list of key informants.) (Author/KB)

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THE 1997 ILLINOIS DIRECTORS' STUDY

ED 413 066

A Report to the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation

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August 1997

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THE 1997 ILLINOIS DIRECTORS' STUDY

Funded by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation

In March, 1997, a survey was mailed to 2,325 directors of licensed and exempt early childhood programs in Illinois. The 840 directors responding to the survey were mostly females (96%) and slightly more than half (55%) were over the age of 40. The respondents were predominantly white (89%); directors of color represented 11% of the sample. Seventy-two percent of the directors had baccalaureate degrees; 25% had master's degrees.

The directors in this sample have worked in the field of early childhood for an average of 13 years, in administrative positions for an average of 11 years, and in their current positions for an average of 6 years. The largest number of respondents (34%) indicated that they had reached their current positions because someone had encouraged them. Other directors indicated that they were good teachers and were asked to take the position (21%), they always knew they wanted to become a director of a center (17%), or they needed more challenge in a job and becoming a director provided that challenge (17%). Fully 80% of the directors intend to work as a director for at least three more years.

Seventy-one percent of the programs represented in the sample were non-profit with the largest number of non-profit programs being church-based (38%) or independent or agency affiliated (30%). Nineteen percent of the programs were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); 7% of the programs were accredited by organizations other than NAEYC.

Directors' Administrative Knowledge and Skill

From a list of six knowledge and skill areas that have been identified as important to the management of early childhood programs, directors were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 (from no knowledge to extremely knowledgeable) their level of knowledge or skill when they first assumed the position of director and their current level of knowledge or skill. Table 1 illustrates that the majority of directors felt unprepared when they first assumed their administrative positions. They felt least competent in the areas of legal and fiscal management, staff management/human relations, and leadership and advocacy. Three-fourths (76%) of the respondents indicated that they were not prepared for the kinds of issues they encountered when they first became a director. Only 35% felt they were well-trained for their administrative role. As Table 2 shows, directors indicated that on-the-job training contributed most to their current level of knowledge and skill.

Table 1
Directors' Knowledge and Skill

Knowledge/Skill Area	As A New Director	Currently
	M	M
Legal/fiscal management	1.76	3.68
Staff management	2.25	4.15
Educational programming	2.97	4.43
Operations/facilities	2.42	4.27
Marketing/public relations	2.41	4.04
Leadership and advocacy	2.20	3.72

Table 2
Directors' Perceptions of Training Methods

Knowledge/Skill Area	In-service workshop	College courses	On-the-job training
	%	%	%
Legal/fiscal management	10	11	79
Staff management	27	18	55
Educational programming	21	59	20
Operations/facilities	11	11	78
Marketing/public relations	17	8	75
Leadership and advocacy	24	46	30

Directors' Perceptions of Their Work

Figure 1 reveals that most directors report their greatest satisfaction is running a quality program (33%), working with children (32%), helping others (20%), or working with parents (13%). Directors' greatest frustrations are reported in Figure 2. Staffing and staff relations together (39%) represent the largest number of responses to this question. Frustrations with insufficient time to accomplish everything (11%), lack of financial resources (12%), and poor staff compensation (11%) account for many of the remaining responses. There appears be a relationship between directors' perceived level of competence and the type and level of frustration they experience in their job. When asked to choose from a list of 20 adjectives the word or phrase that best described their jobs, the majority of the directors (71%) chose one of the following five adjectives to describe their work: challenging (30%), demanding (11%), stimulating (11%), rewarding (10%), never-ending (9%).

Figure 1
Directors' Greatest Satisfactions

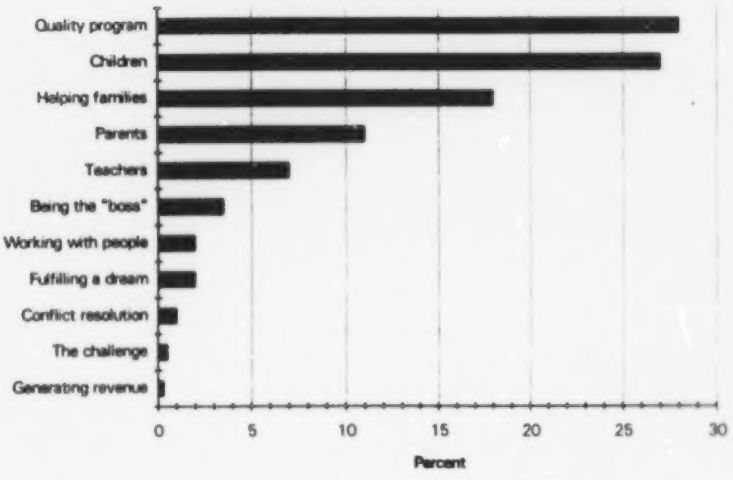
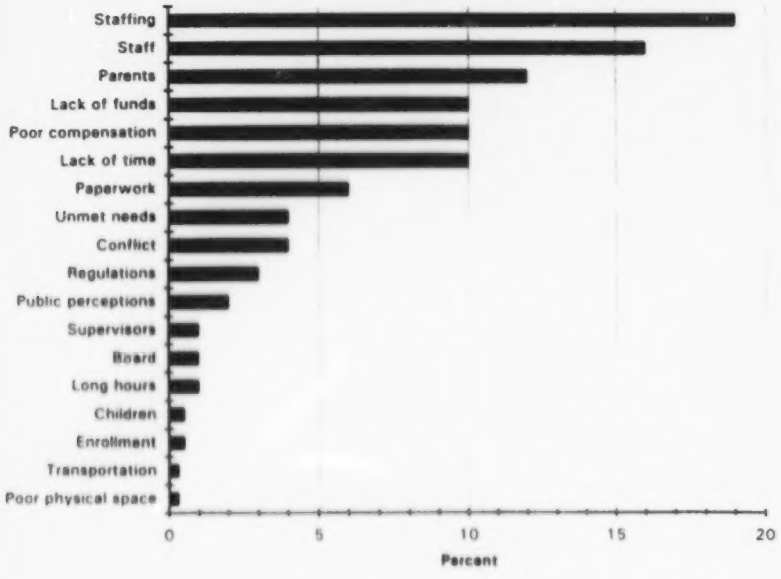


Figure 2
Directors' Greatest Frustrations



Directors' Support Needs

As Figure 3 illustrates, directors have found a variety of services helpful to them in developing administrative competence. Publications, support from their current employer, and information gained from college classes were the most frequently cited. Some of the additional write-in responses included: support from staff, other directors, mentors, former employers, consultants, and books.

Directors were also asked to indicate from a list of 15 areas of support those they felt would be most helpful. Fifty-two percent of the directors indicated that they would like help with staffing issues including recruiting staff and developing a substitute teacher pool. Networking was selected as a helpful support by 52% of directors. Given that 44% of directors report belonging to some type of a directors' support group, there appears to be a need for ongoing collegial support even for those directors who already participate in groups. A complete list of directors' responses to this question is presented in Figure 4.

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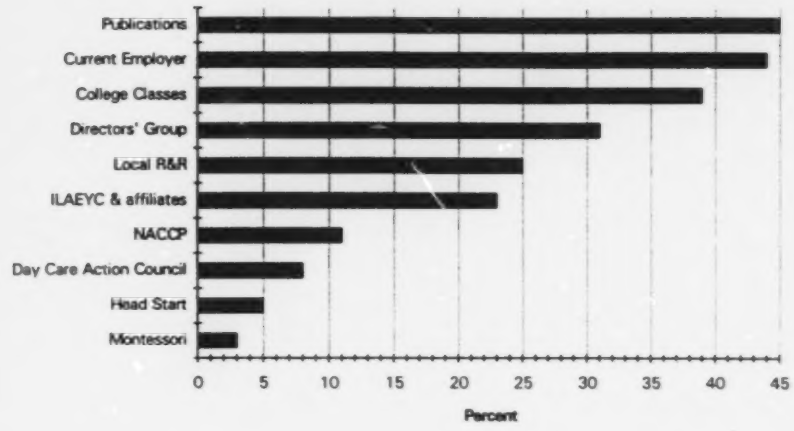
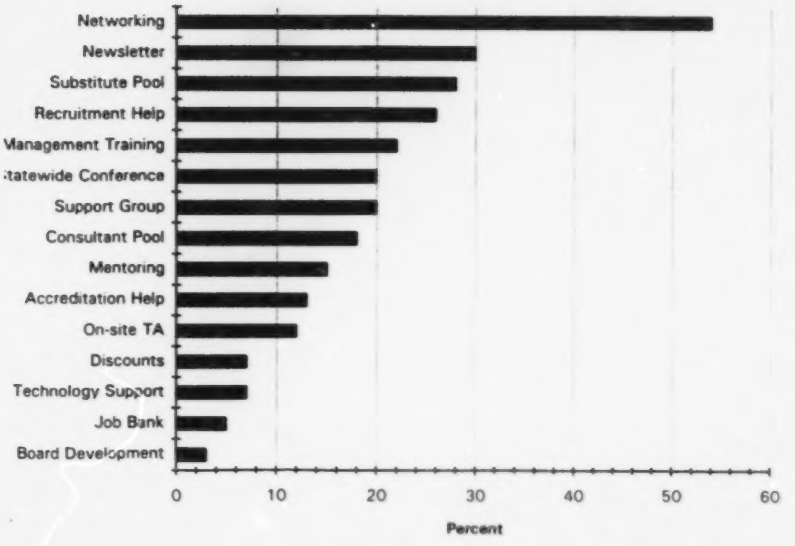
Figure 3
Support Services Directors Find Helpful



When asked whether they felt there was a need for a professional organization that would focus specifically on the needs of directors, 79% answered affirmatively. Some of the reasons directors perceived a need for such an organization included support, networking, information, and training. The 21% who did not feel a need for a professional organization listed a variety of reasons. Among their responses were that they had no time for another commitment, their needs were already being met, and they believed that the diversity in the early childhood field was too great to meet the needs of everyone through a single organization.

Ninety-one percent of the directors perceive benefits to developing an Illinois Director Credential. The most often named benefits related to increasing professionalism among directors, the potential for securing additional training, support, and resources; increasing professional recognition, improving preparation for the job; and improving the quality of early childhood programs. The 9% of directors who were not in favor of a director credential were concerned that a credential might eliminate jobs for some directors and that the additional training required would be expensive.

Figure 4
Additional Support Services for Directors



Focus Groups with Directors

An analysis of the demographics of the survey respondents revealed that directors of color and directors of Head Start programs were underrepresented in the survey data. Thus, seven focus groups were held with 38 directors to probe further their perceptions about training and support services. Two African-American leaders in the Chicago early childhood community were hired to conduct the focus groups. The focus group participants comprised a diverse group: 71% people of color (47% African American, 16% Hispanic, and 8% Indian) and 29% white.

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The directors who participated in the focus groups expressed their disappointment that more training was not available to them when they first assumed their administrative roles. They attributed their eagerness for training to their "insecurity" and their desire to be mentored by experienced directors. The training that was available, particularly in college courses, was geared towards making individuals better teachers.

Consistently identified as the greatest resource for directors was the informal networking and "pooling of resources" that goes on. In addition, directors identified many organizations and individuals as training resources for them. They often rely on "word-of-mouth" in learning about training. Directors emphasized the need to be connected to the broader early childhood community in order to learn of training opportunities as well as available grant monies and other resources for their programs.

The directors in the focus groups indicated that they were eager to "find" the time to meet their own professional development goals but were disappointed at the dearth of opportunities that would fit into their busy schedules. Much of the discussion about obstacles to training focused on the need for scholarship money and, among the African-American directors, the need for classes being offered in their communities. Particularly popular choices of services were long-term, on-site technical assistance, an annual directors' conference, and directors' support groups.

Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight directors' needs for training and support and a coordinated statewide system to deliver these services. The directors described their frustration at being unprepared to assume their administrative roles because pre-service training had inadequately prepared them. Directors, in large part, find existing services to be insufficient or poorly designed to meet their needs.

Recommendations for the future development of services to support and train directors include the establishment of a professional organization to meet the unique needs of administrators of early childhood programs and the development of an Illinois Director Credential to raise the level of administrative competence among directors in the state and to recognize the important work that they do each day.

For additional information or to order a copy of the full report, please contact:

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A Report to the
Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation

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August 1997

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1997 Illinois Directors' Study

Introduction

In the fall of 1996, the Early Childhood Professional Development Project of National-Louis University received funding from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation to conduct a needs assessment of Illinois child care center directors to learn of their needs for training and support. The data collection methods for this needs assessment included: interviews with leaders in the Illinois early childhood community, a directors' survey, and focus groups with Illinois directors. This report represents a summary of the data gathered from all three sources.

Interviews with Illinois Leaders

Ten early childhood leaders in the Illinois were interviewed between October 1996 and January 1997. Appendix A includes a list of these key informants. Appendix B is a list of interview questions. Interviews were conducted between October 1996 and January 1997. Interviews were conducted both in-person and by telephone and lasted between 30 minutes and two hours. The interviews included two sets of questions. The first related to leaders' perceptions of the needs of Illinois directors in general. The second included questions about the possible development of an Illinois director credential.

Who is a director? There was general consensus among the leaders that "director" should be defined broadly to include program directors, multi-site directors, Head Start component coordinators with supervisory responsibilities, and owners of child care centers. The rationale behind such a broad interpretation of the administrative role that was advanced by the leaders appears to be a philosophical belief that there needs to be more cross-fertilization within the field. Many said that by being broad-based, we recognize the fact that people learn from each other. There was dismay among the leaders that the early childhood field is so divisive by program type, funding stream, and sponsorship. Attempts to bring the early childhood community together should be a priority. This philosophy was tempered by the recognition that including everyone would make discussions more complicated and meeting everyone's needs potentially more difficult. Still, they felt that being inclusive was a worthwhile goal. The only exception was made in recommending that family child care providers not be included in the definition of director. The role of the family child care provider is seen as considerably different from that of other child care program administrators.

What does professional development mean to directors? Professional development was defined broadly by the leaders who were interviewed. Their definitions of professional development included workshops, conferences, participating on association committees, and attending college classes. A few included in-house training and informal networking. The discussions about professional development also highlighted many of the excellent resources available to train and support directors across the state. These resources will be discussed in greater detail in a alter section of this report.

What is your perception of directors' need for management training? The leaders' perceived that directors need much more support in their roles as administrators than they are currently receiving. For many of the leaders, supporting directors begins with alleviating their sense of isolation by encouraging formal and informal networking with

other directors. This networking can be the start of a consistent source of information on best practices especially in difficult areas (e.g., serving children with special needs).

In commenting on directors' overall competence, the leaders felt that many directors appear overwhelmed by their responsibilities, do not know where to turn for help, have little if any supervision, and are focused more on solving immediate problems in their programs than on developing skills for long-term success. A few of the leaders interviewed suggested that directors need academic training, but this was not an area of consensus.

The leaders felt that the design of director training should be based on relating practical information in a concise manner that is easy to apply to the participants' respective programs. There appeared to be some disagreement about the level at which training should be offered and the format it should take. While some leaders advocated directors' enrollment in college courses, others suggested the development of "information in sound bites."

Many types of possible training formats were mentioned during the interviews: mentoring, job shadowing, journaling, on-site performance focused assessment, and demonstration of competence in key areas. One leader suggested developing training cassettes for directors who commute to their jobs. The responses to this question clearly indicate that perceptions of the competence and academic experience of directors differ greatly. While some leaders seemed to be focused on a professional development model that included college courses and a more formal career development lattice, others were focused on directors taking individual workshops and on their reading professional journals. The desirability of tying directors' training to increased compensation was only mentioned by two individuals.

Who currently provides services to Illinois directors? Although responses to the previous question seem to indicate that there are many gaps in directors' training and in directors' access to training opportunities, Table 1 highlights their descriptions of the many and varied services that currently exist for directors. Of course, many of the organizations listed below provide general information that is not specific to the director role.

How could a directors' association build on the opportunities and support systems that directors currently identify as helpful to them? Discussions related to this question focused on mentoring new directors, coordinating the current system of training for directors with a comprehensive training calendar, creating networking opportunities for directors to minimize isolation and competition, advocating for improved wages, and designing a conference specifically for Illinois directors.

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) is currently set up to serve as a database for the Illinois early childhood community. It was suggested that efforts be made to collaborate with INCCRRA to solve some of the problems related to advertising and offering training to directors. Chicago Metro AEYC is working on developing their annual conference to better meet the needs of directors by offering a specialized track with sessions of interest to directors, bolstering attendance at directors' suite talks and inviting directors of accredited programs to present at the conference. In addition, Chicago Metro AEYC is making its *Parentimes* newsletter available

to directors on disk for their use as a template which can be personalized for the parents at their respective centers.

Table 1
Services for Illinois Directors

Name of Service Provider	Services Offered
Chicago Metro AEYC	Accreditation Project directors' group
	Annual conference
	Anti-Bias Commission Administrators' group
Child Care Resource and Referral Services	New Director Orientation
	Annual directors' breakfasts
	Technical assistance
City Colleges	CDA Training
Department of Human Services	In-service training
Ecumenical Child Care Network	Accreditation Project, support
Erikson Institute	Supervision classes
	Bridge to Professional Development
Family Resource Coalition	African-American Caucus
Illinois Head Start and Day Care Association	Training
Illinois Mental Health Association	Training
Illinois State Board of Education	Training
NBCDI and Illinois affiliate	Training and technical assistance
National-Louis University	*Taking Charge of Change*
	McCormick Fellows Leadership Training
	AT&T Accreditation Project
	Family-Friendly Directors Training
	Organizational Climate Assessment
Starnet	Training

Who should sponsor a directors' association? There were several organizations proposed as possible lead agencies for a directors' association. The most frequently named organizations were: ILAEYC, Chicago Metro AEYC, INCCRRA, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and the early childhood department of a university. ILAEYC was suggested by many of the leaders as an option because of its national affiliation and involvement in policy issues; however, it was seen as a problematic choice because it is not seen as having the capacity to run a directors' association. Chicago Metro AEYC, while clearly a popular choice, is a local organization whose mission does not include service to the entire state. The Child Care Resource and Referral System was also seen to have possible disadvantages including the bureaucracies inherent in a state agency and its focus on providing services but not ensuring quality. INCCRRA, although the newest "player" in the early childhood community, was advanced as a viable option for a new directors' association. It certainly fits within the mission of the organization and in its fledgling stage might welcome the opportunity to take a leadership role in Illinois. Possible models for an Illinois directors' association centered on a community affiliate or cluster model which would bring together directors in regions of the state (similar to the CCR&R Service Delivery Area, SDA, system).

Is there a need for an Illinois director credential? The group of leaders was evenly divided between those who had not heard anything about the development of a director credential and those who had and had many questions about it. The main concerns with the development of a credential focused on identifying the target group of directors who would pursue such a credential and providing incentives to directors seeking a credential. There was general consensus among those familiar with the concept of credentialing directors that such an effort would differentiate directors offering professional recognition to those who upheld a certain standard of competence.

One of the individuals interviewed described the efforts of a group of American Montessori Society members to advance a director credential within that organization. The experience was a difficult one and the initiative was eventually defeated.

There was some discussion that a director credential should be tied somehow to the Type 75 certificate, although it was uncertain how this would be done and for which group of directors this might be important. Individuals were eager to begin brainstorming the specifics of developing a credentialing system including the possibility of different levels of credentialing and tying competencies to licensing regulations.

Who should be involved in discussions related to the development of a director credential? The individuals mentioned by these leaders served as the preliminary list of invitees for the Illinois Director Credential Symposium held April 24-25, 1997 at Cantigny. The list of organizations and groups mentioned was long and included professional development organizations, two-year and four-year colleges, existing collaboratives, commission leadership, state agencies, and professional associations. Specific individuals within each of these organizations were also mentioned.

It was apparent from the list that these leaders believed that broad-based coalition building was the first step in the development of a credential in our state. Every attempt was made to include as many of these individuals as possible at the symposium given limited space and people's availability.

Who should be consulted about issues relating to director training, support, and credentialing? The leaders' responses to this question provided some of the most valuable information gathered from the interviews. It was critically important for the success of this needs assessment that input be received from a broad sample of individuals. Particularly helpful were the names of individuals within organizations and sectors of the early childhood community who are typically underrepresented in large-scale decision making in the field or who are not involved in collaborative initiatives across program types. Gathering information from each of these individuals represents an ongoing effort. As work on the development of a director credential and/or a directors' association continues, the input from a wide range of individuals will be a priority.

Illinois Early Childhood Directors' Survey

In March 1997 surveys were mailed to the 3100 licensed and exempt child care centers in Illinois. A total of 775 surveys were returned as undeliverable. By June, 840 surveys had been completed and returned from the total 2,325 delivered. This represents a 36% response rate. The survey (Appendix C) was a four-page instrument that used a

variable response format of fixed response and open-ended questions. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Background information on respondents. Almost all of the 840 respondents (97%) were directors; the remaining group were assistant directors. The vast majority of respondents (96%) were female. The respondents ranged in age from their twenties to sixties with a slightly greater number of directors (55%) over the age of 40 years than younger. The respondents were predominantly white (89%); directors of color represented 11% of the sample.

The directors were a largely educated group with fully 72% holding at least a baccalaureate degree and 25% holding master's degrees. These data are consistent with the findings of the 1992 DCFS Report on Child Day Care that found that 87% of the directors who responded to the survey had more education than was required by law. In that study, 85% of the directors held at least a baccalaureate degree and 37% of that number held master's degrees. The findings in this study also corroborate those regarding the educational level of directors found in the 1989 Illinois Director' Study where 72% of directors held baccalaureate degrees and 22% held master's degrees. The findings in this study and those in the DCFS report differ from those of the 1989 National Child Care Staffing Study (NCCSS). The NCCSS found that while almost 75% of directors had some college education, only 42% had a bachelor's degree or more. The NCCSS also found that directors with early childhood training received somewhat higher salaries ($10.58 vs. $8.38) and directors with college degrees earned more than directors with less education ($11.75 vs. $9.69 or less). Ten percent of directors in that study earned $5 an hour or less and only 8% earned over $15 per hour (Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips, 1989).

The respondents in the present study were an experienced group of early childhood professionals. They have worked in the field of early childhood for an average of 13 years, in administrative positions for an average of 11 years, and in their current positions for an average of 6 years. According to the 1995 Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study years of administrative experience of center directors was positively related to quality. In that study, measures of administrative characteristics included years of education, age, prior early childhood experience, tenure at the center, staff ratings of administrator's organizational skills, curriculum leadership, community involvement, and participation in the professional early childhood community. Fully 80% of the directors in this study intend to work as a director for at least three more years. Those who did not intend to continue working as directors gave the following reasons: retiring, moving, returning to the classroom, needing better compensation or benefits, or experiencing burn out.

The professional literature suggests that directors reach their current positions because others saw their leadership ability and encouraged them to pursue the position. The data from this study also bear this out. When asked to indicate from a list of six choices how they had reached their current position, the largest number of respondents (34%) chose that response. Other directors indicated that they were good teachers and were asked to take the position (21%), they always knew they wanted to become a director of a center (17%), or they needed more challenge in a job and becoming a director provided that challenge (17%).

Background information on respondents' programs. The 840 directors responding to the survey represented counties in Illinois from as far north as McHenry County, as far

west as Adams County, and as far south as Union County. The respondents represented a variety of types of programs around the state. Seventy-one percent of the programs were non-profit with the largest numbers of non-profit programs being church-based (38%) or independent or agency affiliated (30%). Church-based programs are slightly over-represented in this sample of Illinois child care programs. Current DCFS data from the Statewide Resource and Referral System show that 27% of programs are church-based. Among the for-profit programs, 61% were private proprietary or partnership and 33% were chain or corporation. Comparison data from DCFS are not available in these categories.

Of the 840 programs represented by the respondents. 19% were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and an additional 5% were currently in the self-study phase of accreditation. In addition, 7% of the programs were accredited by organizations other than NAEYC.

Directors' administrative knowledge and skill. From a list of six knowledge and skill areas that have been identified as potentially important to the management of early childhood programs, directors were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 their level of knowledge or skill when they first assumed the position of director and their current level of knowledge or skill (1 = I have no knowledge or skill in this area; 5 = I am extremely knowledgeable or competent in this area). Table 2 illustrates directors' responses to these two questions.

In general, what is evident from the data in Table 2 is that the majority of directors felt unprepared when they first assumed their administrative position. Their average scores in each of the six areas represented little to no knowledge or skill as a new director. In particular, when they first assumed their positions as directors, they feel least competent in the area of legal and fiscal management and it continues to be the area they feel least competent in. The directors feel most competent (both when they first assumed their position and now) in the area of educational programming.

These findings support those found in the 1989 Illinois Directors' Study that educational programming was the directors' strength and legal and fiscal management represented an area in need of continued work for the directors. It is interesting to note that while the general pattern is the same for both studies, the levels of knowledge and skill in each of the areas was considerably higher in the present study than in the 1989 research. It is unclear whether directors are indeed more knowledgeable now than they were eight years ago or whether the directors' who responded in the present study are more knowledgeable than their peers eight years ago.

The findings relating to directors' administrative knowledge and skill are supported by the directors' responses to a series of questions on the survey about their first administrative position. Only one-half of the directors (51%) felt confident and self-assured, 76% were not prepared for the kinds of issues they encountered, and only 35% felt they were well-trained for their administrative role.

Directors were asked to indicate which of three types of training most contributed to their current level of knowledge and skill in each of the six areas: in-service workshops, college courses, on-the-job training. Directors reported that, in general, on-the-job training had contributed most to their current level of knowledge or skill. As Table 3 illustrates, the

two exceptions to this are the areas of educational programming and leadership and advocacy which directors reported having learned in school.

Table 2
Directors' Administrative Knowledge and Skill (N = 840)

Knowledge/Skill Area	As a New Director	Currently
	M	M
Legal/fiscal management	1.76	3.68
Staff management	2.25	4.15
Educational programming	2.97	4.43
Operations/facilities	2.42	4.27
Marketing/public relations	2.41	4.04
Leadership and advocacy	2.20	3.72

Table 3
Directors' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Three Training Methods

Knowledge/Skill Area	In-service Workshops	College courses	On-the-job Training
	%	%	%
Legal/fiscal management	10	11	79
Staff management	27	18	55
Educational programming	21	59	20
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Marketing/public relations	17	8	75
Leadership and advocacy	24	46	30

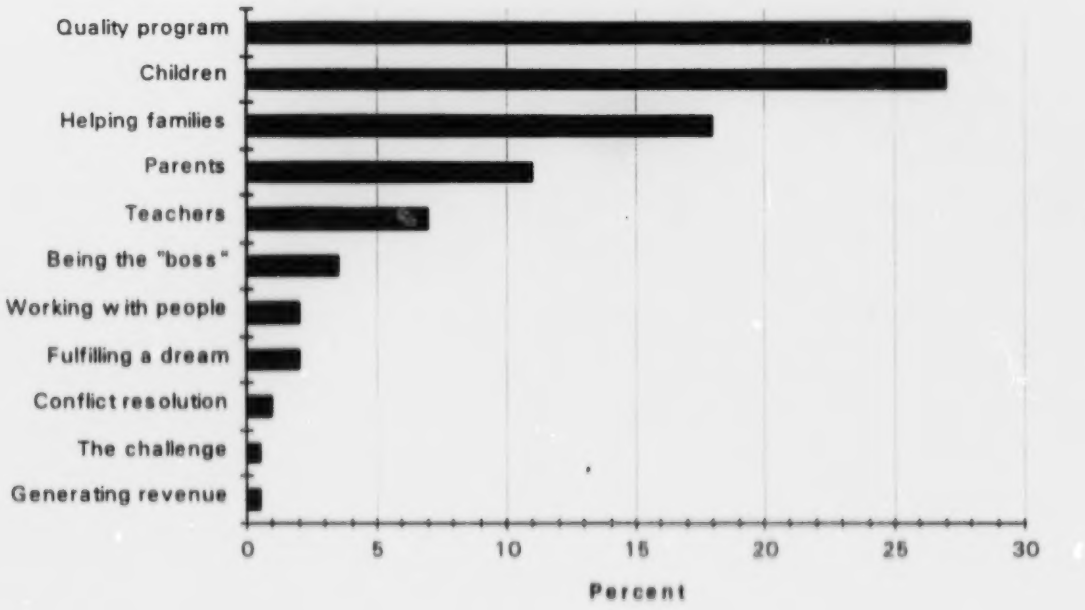
Directors' perceptions of their work. The survey asked directors to complete two open-ended sentences on the survey describing their greatest satisfactions as directors. Figure 1 shows directors' responses to this question. Most directors reported their greatest satisfaction was running a quality program (33%), working with children (32%), helping others (20%), or working with parents (13%).

Directors' greatest frustrations are reported in Figure 2. Staffing and issues with staff relations together (39%) represent the largest number of responses to this question. Frustrations with insufficient time to accomplish everything (11%), lack of financial resources (12%), and poor staff compensation (11%) account for many of the remaining responses. The directors' sources of satisfaction and frustration were reminiscent of those heard in the 1989 Illinois Directors' Study. Consistently reported as satisfactions were helping children and families; frustrations included administrative tasks such as recruitment of qualified staff, and time and financial pressures.

In comparing directors' perceived frustrations with their perceptions of their own knowledge and skill, an interesting picture develops. Directors feel least competent in the areas of legal and fiscal management, staff management/human relations, and leadership and advocacy both when they first assume their role as director and currently. There

appears be a relationship between directors' perceived level of competence in these areas and the type and level of frustration they experience in their jobs.

Figure 1
Directors' Greatest Satisfactions in Their Work (N = 840)



The directors were asked to choose from a list of 20 adjectives the word or phrase that best described their job. The majority of the directors (71%) chose one of the following five words to describe their work: challenging (30%), demanding (11%), stimulating (11%), rewarding (10%), never-ending (9%). The only words that were not selected by any of the directors were boring and influential.

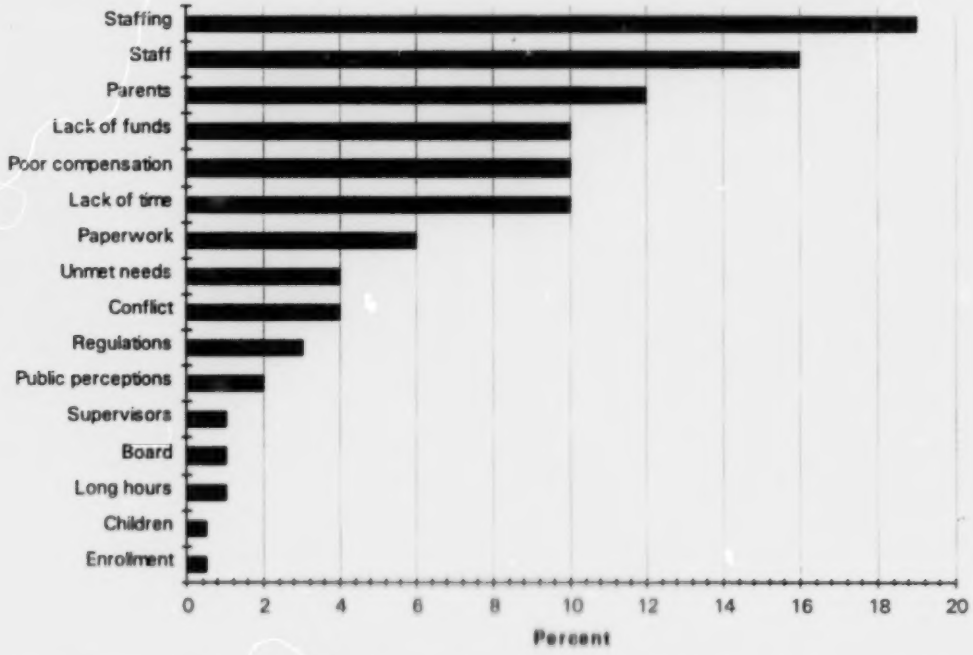
Directors' support. The survey asked directors to indicate the three sources of support they had found most helpful in developing their management and leadership skills as a director. As Figure 3 illustrates, directors have found a variety of services helpful to them in developing their administrative competence. In particular, the directors indicated support from their current employers (46%), professional publications (45%), college classes (40%), local directors' groups (30%), and local resource and referral agencies (26%). Many of the directors wrote in their own responses in the *Other* category. Some of the most frequent write-in responses were support from: staff, other directors, mentors, past employers, consultants, and books. The Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children (ILAEYC) and the National Association of Child Care Professionals (NACCP) were among the professional organizations directors belong to.

Directors were also asked to indicate from a list of 15 areas of support those they felt would be most helpful. Fifty-two percent of the directors indicated that they would like help with staffing issues including recruiting staff and a substitute pool. Networking was selected as a helpful support by 52% of directors. Given that 44% of directors report belonging to some type of directors' support group, there appears to be a need for ongoing

collegial support even for those directors who already participate in groups. A complete list of directors' responses to this question is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 2
Directors' Greatest Frustrations in Their Work (N = 840)

One way to coordinate the services that directors are asking for is through the development of a professional organization for Illinois directors. When asked on the survey whether they felt a need for an organization that would focus specifically on the



needs of directors, 79% answered affirmatively. The reasons directors perceived a need for such an organization included support, networking, information, and training. In the directors' own words, there is a need for an Illinois Directors' Association because *"No one knows what this job is like until they have lived it"; "We have been on our own too long!"; "We need all the support we can get!"*

The 21% who did not feel a need for a professional organization listed a variety of reasons. Among their responses were that they had no time for another commitment, their needs were already being met, and they believed that the diversity in the early childhood community was too great to meet the needs of everyone through one organization.

Figure 3
Support Services Directors Find Helpful (N = 840)

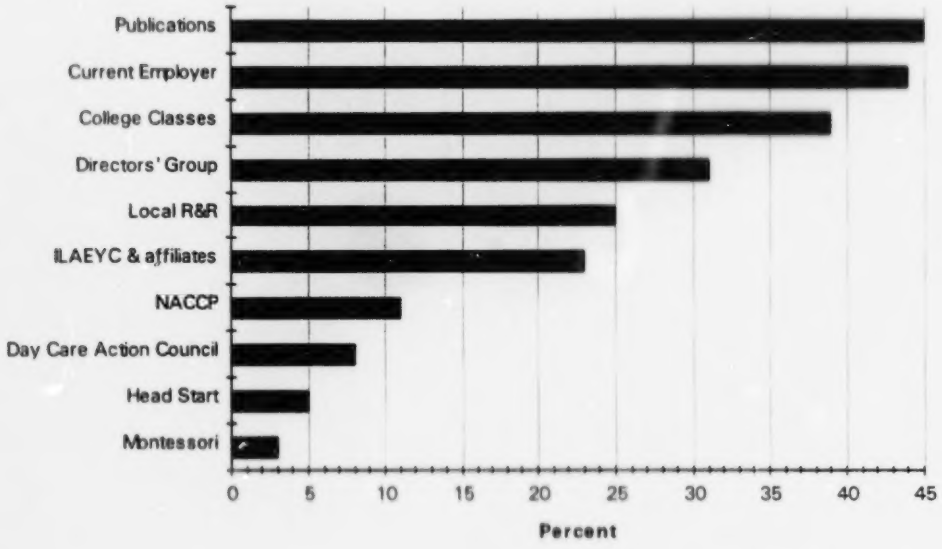
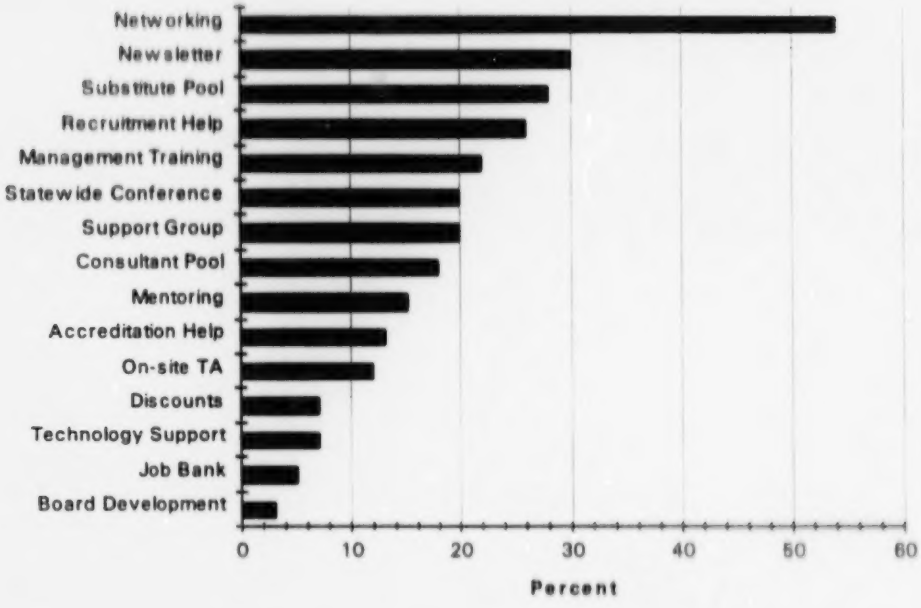


Figure 4
Additional Support Services Desired by Directors (N = 840)



Illinois Director Credential. Ninety-one percent of the directors perceive benefits to developing an Illinois Director Credential. The most frequent responses related to increasing professionalism among directors, the potential for securing additional training, support and resources; increasing recognition, improving preparation for the job, and improving the quality of early childhood programs. In their own words, the directors provided a strong rationale for a director credential. One director of an employer-sponsored center in Cook County said:

> *No other educational system dealing with children allows for no credentialing of its administrators. A Type 75 certificate is needed to be a principal or an assistant principal. DCFS requirements for directors are unrealistic and could not possibly prepare a director for the challenges of NAEYC center accreditation, state and federal law compliance, fiscal responsibility, or knowledge of group dynamics necessary to enhance organizational climate. I think the idea is long overdue!*

The sentiments of this director, and many others who share her opinion, echoed the results of 1989 Illinois Directors' Study. When asked to evaluate current licensing requirements for directors, the directors in that study described the requirements as "too lenient" and suggested that "more should be required of directors" (p. 39). In the present study, a director of a private center in Crawford County agreed:

> *To obtain a director credential would benefit me as a director by telling [me] and my staff that being voluntarily credentialed means I am willing to go the extra mile to ensure the best possible quality... And hopefully others on my staff will see the need for further education.*

Another director said:

> *If we had a credentialing system, fewer people would take the director position and get surprised by the demands. There would also be better public understanding of the importance of this role.*

A director of a church-based program in Edwards County said the benefit of a director credential was:

> *Just letting people know you can be trusted.*

On the flip side were those directors who were not in favor of a director credential. One director said:

> *Director credentialing would eliminate jobs for directors who currently hold associate's degrees. Some of the best directors hold only two-year degrees. In a field that fewer people are entering do we really want to lose good people?*

Another director said:

> *We are too concerned about certification and less concerned about quality. The two are not mutually exclusive, but truly good directors do not need any certification, their programs speak for themselves.*

One director offered this ambivalent opinion:

> *It would be great for schools, directors often have little administrative, financial, and other necessary types of experience. However, it would cost money and time for additional training and without the incentive of higher salaries, this would become more of a burden on already over-worked and under-paid directors.*

Focus Groups with Illinois Directors

An analysis of the demographics of the survey respondents revealed that directors of color and directors of Head Start programs were underrepresented in the survey data. Thus, seven focus groups were held with 38 directors to probe further into their perceptions about training and support services. Two African-American leaders in the Chicago early childhood community, Dorothy Carpenter and Deborah Hampton, were hired to conduct the focus groups The Senior Research Associate moderated one focus group to pilot the questions on the discussion guide before distributing it to the consultants. A copy of the focus group discussion guide is included in Appendix D. The sampling for these focus groups used convenience sampling and nomination methods.

As will be seen in the discussion below, the data gathered from the focus groups corroborated the data gathered from the directors' surveys. The focus groups allowed further clarification of some of the issues raised in the directors' survey and this was very helpful. Instances where focus group discussions raised issues not evident in the survey data and those where differences of opinion were evident between the two samples of directors are noted.

Demographic information provided by the focus group participants. The focus group participants comprised a diverse group: 47% African American, 16% Hispanic, 8% Indian, and 29% White. All were either directors or assistant directors of early childhood programs. The focus group participants had less education as a group than did the survey respondents. These directors held more CDAs and associate's degrees rather than baccalaureate degrees.

Directors' training experiences. The directors who participated in the focus groups expressed their disappointment that more training was not available to them when they first assumed their administrative role. The attributed their eagerness for training to their "insecurity" and their desire to be mentored by experienced directors. The training that was available, particularly in college courses, was geared toward *"how to make you a teacher."* As one director said, *"Nobody ever mentioned, or I did not have any exposure to, classes or courses for directors."* As one director of a university-affiliated child care center said:

Consistently identified as the greatest resource for directors was the informal networking and "pooling of resources" that goes on. Directors identified many organizations and individuals as training resources for them. Appendix E is a list of these resources. Directors also learn of these training opportunities in a variety of ways, both formal and informal. One focus group of African-American directors expressed their discouragement that information about training opportunities does not always reach them. Specifically, these directors discussed the fact that many times they are unaware of training available through the Department of Human Services because the mailing does not arrive at their center. They often rely on word-of-mouth" in learning about training.

Directors emphasized the need to be "hooked in" to the broader early childhood community in order to learn of training opportunities as well as available grant monies and other resources for their programs. Membership to organizations including the Day Care Action Council and Chicago Metro AEYC also facilitated the directors' knowledge of training that could help them in their jobs. One focus group of Hispanic directors discussed the particular usefulness of a play therapy course offered on-site by consultants paid by the Irving Harris Foundation. The training experience was particularly helpful because the consultants worked in the classrooms alongside the director and teachers in building their skills in working with children.

The directors, while identifying helpful services, also bemoaned the fact that many training programs were not specifically designed to meet their needs as directors. Further, those college courses that they might be interested in taking were oftentimes prohibitive in cost. Another common theme in the directors' responses across the focus groups was the need for support and training for the new director. As one director of a Head Start program said:

> *You come in and you don't know anything. Or you think you know enough to get by but you're being bombarded with different things. It just seems like you need something supportive to get started.*

Directors' professional development priorities. Directors expressed a variety of opinions about the formats that they found most helpful to their learning. Many identified conferences and professional publications (especially *Child Care Information Exchange*) while others preferred college courses and directors' support groups. Time continued to be a source of tension for these directors. As one member of the focus group of Hispanic directors joked, *"If I had ten extra hours a month, I'd get a massage!"* Directors were eager to "find" the time to meet their own professional development goals but were disappointed in the dearth of opportunities that would fit into their busy schedules. Many of the directors focused on the importance of time for "renewal": networking, relaxation, reading. A small number of directors said they would pursue another degree if they had the time to do so.

It was interesting to learn that some of the directors' most positive training experiences had been those that they had participated in with their staff. While the directors in large part emphasized the need for training specifically designed their own administrative needs. The words of one director indicate the benefit of training directors and staff together.

The reason I think mine was a positive training experience is because I went with my staff for training. It was a positive interchange. What happens a lot of times, I think, is the staff go for training and then they come back and tell me. I was right there with them participating. So, all of us got the same knowledge on the same level. I think that was one of the best ones I have had because we all went as a group.

Much of the discussion about obstacles to training focused on the need for scholarship money and, among the African-American directors, the need for classes being offered in their communities. The need for training in the community arose out of fear of taking public transportation at night or the expense of paying for parking. One director bemoaned the fact that directors with college degrees were less likely to stay with social service agencies "because of the money." As she said, *"You know, you move on to bigger and better places."* There was discussion in one focus group about the positive aspects of the field-based model used by National-Louis University to offer classes to students in convenient locations.

Directors' need for specific training/support services. The directors enthusiastically supported the development of more services. There was some ambivalence about the development of a mentoring network and e-mail connections. While some directors looked forward to having *"someone I can turn to when I need some advice, when I need some help."* Others feared that they would be assigned a "Big Sister" who monitored their every move in a way that was not helpful. One director described the role of the mentor:

[I need] someone who works with you and not someone who tells you what to do. Somebody who can listen to your frustrations and guide you, but not so much as to tell you what you're doing wrong and how to correct it. They'll work with you until you figure it out on your own.... I don't necessarily think that everybody has the ability to be a mentor. I think it really does take a special person.

The concern with e-mail was that without the computer to run it on, or the modem and local access numbers to connect with the e-mail in and of itself would not be useful. In one focus group there was a discussion about a computerized database accessible to directors that would list programs and what services they offer. The directors believed this type of resource would be helpful to them in their networking with other directors.

Among one focus group of African-American directors, there was some concern with the accessibility of a hotline. As one director said, *"I don't know if I'd have the time to explain my issue."* Members of her focus group agreed that *"We don't need a quick fix, right?"* suggesting they need someone to understand the complexity of the issues they face as directors. This issue came down to an issue of "trust" for these directors who believed strongly in the importance of building relationships with others who had "walked in their shoes."

Particularly popular choices of services were long-term, on-site technical assistance, an annual directors' conference, and directors' support groups. In one focus group of African- American directors, there was mention of a new initiative at Chicago Metro AEYC

to focus on the needs of directors in the planning of their annual conference. According to the discussion, the Professional Development Commission is working on creating a leadership conference for directors that might include mentor director workshops. While insurance discounts were seen as helpful to some directors, others who worked in large organizations and did not have responsibility for purchasing insurance were not interested in such a service.

In one of the focus groups of African-American directors there was a great deal of discussion about the kinds of mistakes they had made when they first became directors that they might have avoided had they had a support person to trust. The focus of these discussions was mainly on expensive educational or administrative equipment they had purchased that ended up not suiting their purposes and not being worth the money they had spent. One director used the term "friendly vendors" to describe the kind of salesperson who would help a director determine what was in the center's best interests.

One of the focus groups of African-American directors had a lively discussion about the need to network with directors outside of their agencies and communities. One suggestion that was made was that video teleconferencing be made available to "connect people and address the areas of isolation." One director in this group described the support she was receiving from her boss for this kind of broad networking.

> *I had people that didn't see that part of the director's job is to be out there networking. But that's one of the key jobs because this enhances our program. It's making our program multicultural because we're involved with agencies that are Chinese, Hispanic, and white. So we're bringing together another piece of it. So if you start joining different things, you'll meet people with a common goal.*

Another group echoed this group's interest in supporting diversity within programs when they discussed the importance of exposing children "to all children" from all ethnic groups. There was a passionate discussion about the need for teachers to *"enrich children's minds to start thinking differently."*

The focus group of Hispanic directors discussed the need for access to resources to support their work with bilingual education. Their concerns included the limited bilingual teaching staff they were able to hire and the need for additional support in this area. They also described their need for support for their efforts to create an inclusion program "beyond the 10% mandate." The Hispanic directors also were the only focus group to raise the issue of parent involvement as an issue of primary concern to them. Some of the directors in this group described a community research project they were currently involved in that would expand parent involvement opportunities in their programs.

Directors' attitudes toward an Illinois Director Credential. For the most part, the directors who participated in the focus groups were unaware of state and national efforts to develop a credential for directors. Once the directors were informed about what a directors credential would entail the majority enthusiastically supported its development as a way for directors to demonstrate competence. As one director said, *"I think it is a wonderful idea because too often we get into the position and we have no idea what we're doing."* There was concern, voiced by the African-American directors, about access to the

credential.. As one director put it, *"[The credential] could put other people out of the scope of being able to get it."* One director in the Hispanic focus group was opposed to the idea of a credential because it seemed "elitist." She went on to describe that at a time when few Hispanics were attending college, the credential appeared to be *"another way of keeping people out, making it more exclusionary."*

There was some concern among the directors, as was seen in the responses to the directors' survey, that the credential represented just one more hurdle for them to get over. As one director put it, *"I worry about the number of years of experience I already have and if I would have to get one more credential to maintain my position."* Others expressed their ambivalent feelings about a credential. As one director said, *"On a personal level a credential wouldn't be anything to me. But I think I would like the public recognition of what directors do. And that the credential might encourage directors to pursue additional education."* There was an undercurrent in several of the focus groups that the directors would only be interested in pursuing a credential if it were to become mandatory.

Directors' pleas to policy makers. Directors were given a hypothetical question to respond to during the focus groups: If you had one minute to talk with an Illinois policy maker about your needs as a director, what would you say? The directors' comments were quite varied. Many focused on the need for better compensation, better legislation to protect children, additional resources for training, encouraging programs to seek accreditation, and professional recognition for the importance of the work they do. The discussion among the Hispanic directors raised the issue of community-based child care programs in a way that the other focus groups had not. In this group, a suggestion that money be used to develop family child care homes to promote economic development, train people, and address the need for child care in local communities. As one director put it, *"The idea is to provide funding to support programs where we actually live."*

Supporting Early Childhood Directors -- Different Models

The final goal of this study was to investigate different models for organizing training and support services for directors. An investigation was conducted of existing associations and organizations that support administrators to learn about the elements of their models. This section will present a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of various types of support models. These types include: statewide directors' groups, associations for early childhood administrators, associations for early childhood administrators, associations for educational administrators, principals' centers, and leadership development programs.

Statewide directors' groups. Two of the most successful statewide directors' groups are located in Massachusetts and Oregon. A telephone conversation with Jim Robertson with Plowshares in Boston yielded the following information about Massachusetts' efforts to develop a statewide directors' association. Mr. Robertson described the activities of the Committee on Administrative Leadership, a division of the Boston Association for the Education of Young Children. According to Robertson, The Committee is a group of 20 long-term directors who meet on a monthly basis to discuss professional issues including early childhood leadership and the director's role. The group receives funding from the Boston AEYC and grants to conduct its activities. One of the group's recent activities has been conducting a survey of Boston area directors' groups for the purposes of developing a directory. The publication that reported their findings was

forwarded to the state's 12 resource and referral agencies so that new directors could be made aware of directors' groups in their area. One outcome of this study was the development of additional director training programs through the resource and referral networks. Robertson attests that within the past two years there has been a definite trend toward designing more courses and workshops to meet the needs of directors in the state. The Office of Child Care Services, formerly the Office of Children, provided funding for a series of directors' institutes around the state that also bolstered the number of training opportunities for Massachusetts directors.

When asked about a statewide directors' association, Robertson reported that the publication on directors' groups was intended to serve as a foundation for the linking of directors' groups around the state. Already in existence is the Massachusetts Day Care Association ("MADCA") founded 30 years ago to meet the needs of directors from large agencies that hold state contracts. The primary mission of MADCA, a non-profit organization, is the development of early childhood directors. In this capacity they work collaboratively with the AEYC affiliates around the state in delivering services. MADCA serves a small segment of the director population, namely directors of agencies who have large government contracts. MADCA has one paid staff person -- an executive director -- and is governed by a board of directors.

MADCA's focus over the years has been political. Lobbying remains MADCA's most important work, according to Robertson. Once an organization that offered networking opportunities for its members, MADCA is now more narrowly focused on the financial arena of directors' work and the political activities necessary to lobby for desired changes. Robertson characterizes them as "a vocal association for lobbying" that has "extensive influence" at the state level. Over the years, MADCA has successfully lobbied for higher child care rates from the state and addressed structural issues within state government including licensing regulations and the development of one state agency to manage all child care dollars. MADCA is currently working on simplifying funding streams with particular attention to contracts, vouchers, and developing continuing of care for children whose care requires multiple funding streams over time.

Recently the Committee on Administrative Leadership include submitted a proposal with the Massachusetts AEYC for a director credentialing pilot to Wheelock College's Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education. The intent of the Committee, according to Robertson, is to use the director credentialing grant to develop an independent directors' association for the state to which each existing directors' groups (identified in the recent survey) would send a member. Within this statewide directors' association, with representation from local directors' groups, regulations for a Massachusetts' director credential would be decided.

The Oregon Association of Child Care Directors (OACCD) is a statewide professional organization for directors and administrators of childhood care and education programs. Its mission is to provide education, advocacy, and support to child care administrators. It does so through quarterly newsletters and sponsorship of several training events each year including conferences, seminars, workshops, and retreats.

OACCD was formed in 1980 by a small group of directors from around the state. They established it as a non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization with by-laws and a

governing board of directors. Board members serve two years, with half of its members being elected at the annual meeting held during each spring conference.

Membership is open to individuals who work with early childhood care and education administration or related fields. There are no organization memberships. Annual dues of $50 entitle members to quarterly newsletters, local affiliate memberships, membership card, certificate, directory, and discounts for all OACCD-sponsored training events. Currently, OACCD has 125-150 members.

Training events vary in size, length, and complexity, but all focus on administrative topics -- business management, program evaluation, staff supervision, training and retention, financial planning, marketing, and policies development.

Local affiliate groups have been formed in five regions and meet monthly. Local meetings offer opportunities for networking and discussion about child care issues. Many affiliate groups invite certifiers, resource and referral personnel, USDA food program staff, and small business development program representatives as guest speakers to share information, provide technical assistance, or discuss regulations and policies. Local affiliate meetings also provide an opportunity for information from the state board of directors to be shared with members.

Advocacy takes place as OACCD board members and designates serve on a variety of state-level committees and task forces including Oregon Center for Career Development in Childhood Care and Education Advisory Committee, One Voice for Child Care, Forging the Link Project, Head Start/Child Care Collaboration Work Group, Early Childhood Education Initiatives Committee and others. Members are kept apprised of legislative issues through reports by local affiliate public policy representatives and newsletter articles.

Associations for early childhood educators. Within the field of early childhood, there are several organizations whose mission specifically focuses on the needs of program directors. Among these are: the Early Childhood Directors Association, the National Association for Child Care Professionals, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Head Start Association, the American Montessori Society, the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Child Care Association, and USA Child Care. Each of these organizations has its own particular focus, yet all include services to administrators of programs within their purview.

These early childhood associations offer a variety of services and activities including: trade journals, newsletters, conferences, seminars, technical assistance, publications, discounts on insurance, advocacy, public policy, on-line databases and electronic mail, leadership development, credentialing and accreditation, research programs, affiliate membership services at the local and regional levels, and professional recognition awards and scholarships. Each of these early childhood associations also offers networking and collegial support opportunities through annual conferences and seminars held throughout the year.

These early childhood associations vary greatly in size (from several hundred to several hundred thousand members) and therefore, they also vary in organizational structure and budget. They all have governing boards and officers that make decisions

about the future of their respective organizations. Many of the responsibilities for coordinating events for members are carried out by members themselves who volunteer their time in support of their organizations. All of the organizations operate as non-profits.

The primary advantage of these large membership associations is their ability to design training programs and services to meet the unique needs of their constituencies. For example, the National Head Start Association has a division specifically for Head Start directors through which they offer seminars and training sessions, a speakers' bureau, a newsletter, scholarships, and awards.

The National Child Care Association (NCCA) is also a front-runner in the development of a national credential for directors, only a recent trend in early childhood professional development across the country. NCCA developed their National Administrator Credential (NAC) in the Management of Programs Serving Children and Families to recognize directors' achievement as a professional and to ensure that they continue to have the opportunity to enhance their professional development.

The Early Childhood Directors' Association (ECDA) in St. Paul, Minnesota was organized in 1975 as a statewide directors' association providing education and support services for administrators of early childhood programs. ECDA is struggling to broaden its membership in an attempt to become a national association. They currently have 500 members to which they provide discounted subscription rates to Early Childhood News and the Journal of Child Care Administration, discounts on ChildCraft and Redleaf Press products, and publications and training videos produced by ECDA. ECDA offers two levels of membership: comprehensive membership ($80) and affiliate membership ($25). Comprehensive membership is designed for Minnesota residents who attend many ECDA training seminars. Affiliate membership is designed for members who wish to receive mailings and product discounts but don't expect to attend many ECDA training sessions. ECDA currently has 15 affiliates in Minnesota and Idaho. Former Executive Director, Susan Peterson, reports ECDA's "best money maker" is their publication sales. Recruiting new members and offering training for directors are two of the main activities of the organization, both of which are quite "labor-intensive." Ms. Peterson identified two strengths of ECDA: establishing an organization to meet the unique needs of directors and the capacity to gather data on directors to further meet their needs.

The National Association of Child Care Professionals in Christiansburg, Virginia was founded in 1984 to offer networking opportunities and support services to child care supervisors and managers. The organization is dedicated to the professional development of its 1200 members. It conducts educational programs, publishes two bimonthly publications -- *Caring for Your Children* and *Professional Connections*, holds an annual conference -- *How Successful Directors Manage*, and presents an award each year to an *Unsung Successful Director*.

The primary disadvantage of these associations is their reliance on annual membership dues (at $30-75) to sustain program operations. In most cases, these funds are supplemented by additional fees for training programs and conferences sponsored by the organizations. Still and all, funding remains tight for most of these organizations. This limits the type and variety of services they can offer. Further restricting the reach of these organizations is the limited paid staff that many of these organizations have available to carry out their services to members. Most of the organizations function with fewer than

10 paid staff. Problems with efficiency and timely responses to member request are endemic to these organizations whether they are small like NCCA with three paid staff or large like NAEYC with 70 paid staff serving a membership of 100,000.

Associations for educational administrators. Outside of the field of early childhood there are many organizations that serve administrators of educational programs, most especially primary and secondary school principals. Among these associations are the National Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The American Association of School Administrators in Arlington, Virginia has been meeting the needs of administrators and executives of school systems and educational service agencies since 1865. The organization sponsors numerous professional development seminars for its 15,000 members through its National Academy for School Executives dedicated to excellence in educational system leadership. Benefits to its members also includes a monthly newspaper -- *Leadership News*, pamphlets, reports, and a monthly magazine, *The School Administrator*.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) in Alexandria, Virginia was established in 1921 as a professional association of principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals. NAESP sponsors the National Distinguished Principals Program, the President's Award for Educational Excellence, the American Student Council Association, the National Fellows Program, and the Institute for Reflective Practice. NAESP offers professional development workshops throughout the year as well as a monthly newsletter -- *Communicator*, a bimonthly publication on parents, two magazines -- *The K-8 Principal* and *Principal*, and quarterly finance and research newsletters and an annual convention for its 26,000 members.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) was established in 1916 to meet the needs of school principals and assistant principals engaged in secondary school administration. NASSP offers many professional development opportunities to its 43,000 members including assuming leadership roles in the organization's numerous committees. NASSP also publishes information in various formats for its members including an annual newsletter -- *Administrative Information Report*, a monthly magazine -- *Leadership for Student Activities*, the *Journal for Middle Level and High School Administrators*, a bimonthly newsletter focused on research and other issues, and newsletters focused on legal and curricular issues relevant to its members. NASSP also holds an annual convention in the spring.

These organizations, like those serving the early childhood community, offer a variety of services to their members. Two of the distinguishing characteristics of these organizations compared with those serving early childhood professionals are the membership dues and annual budgets. The membership dues of these organizations range between $100-200 compared to the $30-75 charged by early childhood associations. This difference is due in large part to the difference in earning potential between the two groups of educators. According to Michael Townsend at the Illinois State Board of Education's Illinois Administrators' Academy in Chicago, Illinois principals' salaries range from $40,000-80,000. Early childhood directors' salaries averaged $20,488 in 1989 according to the National Child Care Staffing Study.

The budgets of the two types of organizations are also very different. While most of the early childhood organizations described in the previous section function with budgets between $200,000 - $1,000,000 the budgets of the organizations serving the primary and secondary school community are in the $5-25 million dollar range. It is important to note also that the number of members in the two types of organizations fall in the same range; that is to say that the larger budgets are not meeting the needs of more members.

Principals' centers. Within the field of education there are also a host of organizations known as principals' centers that are established to provide networks of principals to create and maintain leadership development opportunities including sponsoring workshops and discussions, support, and sharing resources relevant to professional growth. As with the associations serving the early childhood and broader education community, these principals' centers offer a variety of services to their members.

An annual listing of these centers is published in the National Director of Principals' Centers. This directory includes information for locating the centers by state and describes their mission and services. Virtually all states have principals' centers. They are as diverse in their organization as they are in their membership. Many centers are a formal part of state departments of education. Some are grassroots organizations established by autonomous groups of principals. Some centers have been established through the efforts of school districts and others are integral parts of university departments of education. Many centers combine several sponsorships, but the goal is the same: to help principals provide leadership for their schools. The National Network of Principals' Centers is an organization established to foster the exchange of ideas and facilitate professional communication among many of these principals' centers and leadership academies in the United States as well as several foreign countries.

The principals' centers offer a variety of services to their members. These services include: the development of training materials and activities, grants, newsletters, support networks, technical assistance, and certification programs. One particularly innovative program offered by the SuperCenter in Brooklyn, New York includes field consultants and "buddy intervisitation." The field consultants, a cadre of recently retired principals act as mentors to assistant principals. They visit the participants and help them to develop strategies for solving their pressing problems. Each assistant principal works on a research project, as well. The "buddy intervisitation" program encourages assistant principals to make school visits to their colleagues in their buddy groups. They set up peer networks and return to their home schools with new ideas and fresh approaches.

Two of the most widely recognized principals' centers are located at Vanderbilt University and Harvard University. The Vanderbilt International Institute for Principals was established in 1981 as a unique opportunity for principals to refine their leadership skills and to explore new directions in schooling. The Institute seeks outstanding school leaders who desire a challenging program of professional development. Each summer, the Institute invites a maximum of 36 elementary and secondary school principals from around the world to participate in a 13-day day training program on the campus of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Institute topics include developing schools as learning communities, leadership and school change, thinking skills and new learning technology, and emerging roles of the principal. The format of the training sessions includes presentations, cases, skill development activities, peer exchange, and analysis of individuals' learning styles from several perspectives. Sessions are interactive and draw

upon the expertise of presenters and participants. A unique feature of the Institute is the use of problem-based learning as a means of promoting transfer of learning to the workplace.

The Institute faculty includes two institute directors, professors from Peabody College, Fordham University, Vanderbilt University, and professionals from state boards of education, and principals' centers. Institute costs for 1997 were $1500 per person. This covers instructional activities, program materials, and a riverboat dinner cruise. For an additional fee, tuition credit is available for the students in the Peabody College doctoral program in educational leadership. A limited number of partial scholarships are available. Lodging is provided to Institute participants at an institute rate of $89 plus tax per night single or double occupancy.

Promotional literature for the Institute describes the impact it has had on principals as well as the larger principal community. The Institute is not only a program of professional development, but also a vehicle for developing networks among school leaders internationally. The Institute has been instrumental in helping to start new leadership development centers in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Southeast Asia. It has also been a leader in establishing the Asia Pacific Educational Leadership Network.

The Principals' Center at Harvard Graduate School of Education was founded in 1981 by Roland Barth and a committed group of principals, school leaders, and Harvard faculty to be "a place for reflection, solace, and collaboration" (International Network of Principals' Centers, 1993). Now the center also certifies aspiring principals and collaborates with a number of other professional organizations. In completing its mission to enhance the personal and professional development of principals and other school leaders, the Center offers two Summer Institutes, an annual calendar of events including workshops, seminars, and lectures, a newsletter, and a journal.

The Center is affiliated with the Graduate School of Education and its relationship is described as "cooperative." The Center serves as the certifying agent within the school for aspiring principals. Its is not governed nor funded by Harvard, but it does receive a core budget contribution from Harvard. Its funding sources include the Graduate School of Education, Summer Institutes and Membership, and Professional Development Fees.

The Center is governed by a director who consults monthly with an advisory board which is comprised of school principals, superintendents, and other school leaders. The board offers suggestions for program and membership. Currently the Principals' Center is expanding the Summer Institute concept by co-sponsoring institute in California and Washington, D.C. The vision is quality Summer Institutes throughout the U.S.

The primary advantage of a principals' center model of professional development include affiliation with a university and its resources including financial contributions (from the university as well as federal, state, and private funding), in-kind contributions including space, student workers, university personnel, college credit to participants, and access to university databases. The primary disadvantage of this model, particularly for principals' centers not affiliated with universities, are limited financial resources (including the precarious position of centers which rely on state funding or grants). Still and all, principals' centers offer valuable lessons to the early childhood community for the growth of professional development opportunities within the profession. Many innovative

approaches for training and supporting principals are being developed in these centers that could be modified to meet the needs of early childhood directors.

Leadership Development Programs

Two innovative models for training early childhood directors that sponsored by early childhood associations are the Head-Start Johnson & Johnson Management Fellows Program at UCLA and the National Head Start Fellows of The Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition. Established in 1991 to develop and strengthen the management skills of Head Start directors, the Fellows Program has 444 alumni. Conducted by the Anderson School at UCLA, the program is fully funded by Johnson & Johnson and The Head Start Bureau. According to Ronald Herndon, President of the National Head Start Association and a graduate of the Fellows Program, "The Head Start -- Johnson & Johnson Fellows Program introduces Head Start directors to the most current successful business management practices. Also the program introduces people to technology."

Two programs are offered each summer at UCLA consisting of 80 hours of intensive training over a two-week period. The 40 participants in each group are housed at a hotel on the UCLA campus and classes are conducted at the new Anderson Management Complex within walking distance of the hotel. The two weeks are highlighted with several special events and culminate with a formal graduation ceremony.

The curriculum of the Fellows Program is designed from a strategic planning perspective and builds both executive and entrepreneurial management skills. Lectures, workshops, and group discussions cover subjects such as human resource management, organization design and development, financial management, computers and information systems, operations, and marketing. Case studies are used to illustrate key concepts and enhance learning. An essential component of the Fellows Program is the involvement of the Head Start directors' supervisors as "co-participants" during the last three days of the program. The supervisors and directors work together on a strategic initiative called the Management Improvement Project (MIP). These MIPs prepare the directors to implement projects of major significance upon returning to their organizations.

To be considered for admission, an applicant must be a Head Start director for a minimum of three years, play a leadership role in a local, state, or regional community organization for a minimum of three years, and pledge to work with and/or train other Head Start directors in the future.

Myra Brown, Program Coordinator for the Fellows Program, described in a recent telephone conversation the development of a new initiative in 1996. The Advanced Management Institute (AMI) provides Fellows the opportunity to take advanced level classes, network with other Fellows, and participate in an innovative Public Policy Forum. From 12 classes, the Fellows can choose four to attend. Johnson & Johnson underwrites the primary expenses of the AMI. Fellows are responsible only for their travel and lodging expenses.

The National Head Start Fellows Program begun in 1996 and operated by The Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition provides recipients the opportunity to spend a year as special assistants to senior managers, policy makers, educators, and

researchers within the Department of Health and Human Services. The Fellows are selected through a national competition on the basis of professional accomplishments and leadership potential in early childhood education and family services, including child care.

In addition to their work, the Fellows take part in educational and professional development programs. Attending regular colloquia enables Fellows to explore issues with senior government officials, prominent scholars and researchers, and innovative early childhood program practitioners. Each Fellow also has a mentor within a national organization involved with children and families.

Stanford University's School of Education sponsors a five-day School Leadership Development Institute each year. According to the program brochure, "The Stanford Leadership Institute is for school leaders who wish to expand their insights on school site leadership." The Institute includes lectures by "renowned educators, reflective sessions with colleagues from throughout the United States, and hands-on work in solving problems commonly faced by field practitioners." Problem Based Learning strategies are used in the Institute. Professor Edwin Bridges at Stanford pioneered this project approach to learning which centers on defining problems relevant to school leaders and solving them through collaboration, analysis, reflection, and feedback.

Many different models of leadership development programs exist. The McCormick Tribune Foundation is already familiar with the training programs of the Early Childhood Professional Development Project, therefore these are not included in the following discussion.

The Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership in Kansas City, Missouri has recently launched T*he Forum for Early Childhood Organization and Leadership Development* to meet the need for more professional development opportunities in the area of early childhood program management and leadership development. David Renz, Director of the Midwest Center, describes four functions that comprise the core elements of the Forum: education, applied research, resource center, community service, and problem solving. Proposed outcomes of the Forum include: enhanced leadership capacity within the early care and education field in a targeted six-state region, development of a new Early Childhood Leadership option within the Master of Public Administration graduate degree program, creation of new career ladder opportunity for professionals in the early care and education field, integration of early care and education management and organization issues into the University of Missouri-Kansas City's certification programs for school principals and superintendents, and enhanced linkages and potential for service integration between early care and education practitioners and allied fields.

According to Roberta Miller of Roberta Miller Associates in Boston, the advantages of housing leadership development programs with colleges/universities include access to resources (both internal and external), expertise among faculty, and the ability to offer credit for training. Some of the problems she perceived within academic institutions include: staffing, autonomy ("convenient control vs. a competent administrator"), and a reactive position to emerging trends and roles in the field. Ms. Miller shared her perceptions of leadership programs housed in academic environments. She spoke of a two-volume document entitled *Leadership in Academia* which presents evaluation data on leadership development programs around the country. The two volumes, one of which

focuses on academia exclusively and one that is broader than academia, are written by the Center for Creative Leadership and the Institute for Educational Leadership respectively.

In her description of successful leadership development programs, Ms. Miller discussed the characteristics that she believed were critical to their success. Included in this list were an organization's ability to be multi-modal (offering training in a variety of formats), interdisciplinary, focus on leaders not settings, narrow vs. broad focus, attract diverse membership, and "show traditions of the field" (help students to spot opportunities, focus on the emerging environment, and develop "cutting edge tools"). One of the most effective models she believes is the training of teams of teachers and directors. She found this to be a more effective approach because it trains groups of people "to think differently" and "to work together differently." One example of this is the principal/teachers team approach adopted by the South Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and School Leadership in Rock Hill, South Carolina. In this program, each of the 103 restructuring schools has a team with a college partner to plan and evaluate their restructuring.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has highlighted the training and support needs of Illinois directors as yet unmet by existing organizations in the state. There are many challenges ahead for the Illinois early childhood community as it grapples with the perceived needs of its directors for additional training and support offered through a coordinated delivery system. As a geographically diverse state, Illinois must also struggle with the implications the different needs of urban, rural, and suburban directors. There are many areas of the state where even the basic supports and training opportunities enjoyed by city directors are simply not available.

Illinois has three options to consider in its efforts to address the needs highlighted in this study. One option might be to establish a new organization specifically designed to meet the unique needs of directors. This option fits with directors' opinions about future directions in the state. The support models outlined in the report provide many useful ideas for designing a new organization that would be responsive to the needs of directors across the state. As the association model data suggested, however, funding would be a primary concern.

Another option is to bolster the capacity of existing organizations such as the Statewide Child Care Resource and Referral System or the AEYC affiliates in the state in their efforts to meet the needs of Illinois directors. This option is potentially attractive because efforts to improve existing services support the infrastructure for Illinois early childhood programs and makes use of existing resources. The disadvantage of this model is that large organizations often experience great difficulty with organizational change; bureaucracies initially created to meet the needs of a population are often unable to adapt sufficiently to changing needs.

A final option may be to collaborate with universities and colleges in establishing an organization to train and support Illinois directors. Possible concerns with this model may include negotiating the details of interactions between the administrators of the training program and the university or college administration (e.g., for the granting of college credit) and defining the relationship between these two entities. These concerns may be

outweighed by the advantages that this type of collaboration provides in partnering with training institutions experienced in providing a variety of services to early childhood professionals as well as accessing resources available at the university or college level.

This study, while providing solid evidence of the need for additional training and support for Illinois directors, does not provide any easy answers. In large part, the answers will depend on the individuals who choose to take up the task of designing the future of early childhood leadership in Illinois. There are many promising directions that these efforts might take. The most important step is in beginning the work.

Appendix A

Key Informants

Bee Jay Ciszek, Executive Director
Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children

Janet Dowling, President
Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)

Marge Doolan, Manager, Training and Development
Department of Human Services

Deborah Hampton, Director
Salvation Army Child Care Services

Betty Hutchison, Professor
National-Louis University

Jamilah Jor'dan, Director
Chicago Metro AEYC Accreditation Project

Carla Peters, Provider Services Director
Day Care Action Council

Eva Serrano, Vice President
El Valor Corporation

Therese Kiley Shepston, Assistant Professor
Bradley University

Cass Wolfe, Statewide Professional Development Coordinator
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Key Question: What does "professional development" mean to early childhood directors?

- For the purposes of this needs assessment, who should we include in our definition of a "director" (center directors, private preschool owners, Head Start directors, state pre-k coordinators, family child care providers)?
- How could an Illinois Directors' Association build on the opportunities and support systems that directors have identified as helpful to them?
- How could a directors' association eliminate some of the barriers that make professional development difficult for directors?
- What conversations have you had with directors about their need for management training?
- Would a directors' association appeal to early childhood administrators in a variety of positions/programs?
- What services should a directors' association provide (clearinghouse for training opportunities, networking, annual directors' conference)?
- Who should sponsor the directors' association (a university, a membership organization, the child care resource and referral network)?
- What models exist for a directors' association?

Key Question: What is the attitude of the early childhood community toward the development of a director credential?

- Is there momentum building in the state toward a director credential?
- Who are the key players in these discussions about a credential?
- Who needs to be involved in these discussions?
- What core competencies have been discussed for directors?

Key Question: What strategies would be most effective in conducting focus groups with Illinois directors?

- What recruitment strategies do you find effective?

Key Question: Who else should I talk to?

Appendix C

ILLINOIS EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTORS' SURVEY
McCormick Tribune Foundation
Focus on Quality Initiative

The Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation is interested in your needs as a director. Please take 10 minutes out of your busy schedule this week to complete this questionnaire and return it in the prepaid envelope provided. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. Your survey responses are confidential and the summary will only report group averages.

About Yourself

Current position: director ____ assistant director ____ Sex: M ____ F ____

Age: 21-30 ____ 31-40 ____ 41-50 ____ 51-60 ____ 61-70 ____

Race/ethnicity: White ____ African American ____ Hispanic ____ Asian ____ Other: _____

What is the highest educational level you have completed?

____ High school diploma
____ Some college
____ CDA
____ Associate's degree Major: _____
____ Bachelor's degree (BA, BS) Major: _____
____ Master's degree (MA, MS, MSW, MBA) Major: _____
____ Professional degree (Ph.D., Ed.D.) Major: _____

How long have you worked in the field of early childhood? ____ years

How long have you worked in an administrative position? ____ years ____ months

How long have you worked in your current administrative position? ____ years ____ months

I reached my current position because ... (check the ***ONE*** that best describes why you became a director)

____ I always knew I wanted to become a director of a center.
____ Others saw my leadership ability and encouraged me to pursue the position.
____ I needed more challenge in a job, and becoming a director provided that challenge.
____ I was a good teacher and was asked to take the position.
____ I knew that to advance professionally in the field I would need to become a director.
____ In order to make the salary I needed, I had to become a director.

Please complete the following sentences:

My greatest satisfaction as a director is _____

My greatest frustration as a director is _____

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Administrative Knowledge and Skill

Below is a list of six knowledge and skill areas that have been identified as potentially important to the management of early childhood programs. To the left of each statement, indicate on a scale of I to 5 your level of knowledge or skill when you first assumed the position of director Then, to the right of each statement, indicate your current level of knowledge or skill in each area.

1 = I have no knowledge or skill in this area
2 = I have limited knowledge or skill in this area
3 = I have some knowledge or skill in this area
4 = I am knowledgeable or competent in this area
5 = I am extremely knowledgeable or competent in this area

As a New Director		*Currently*
___	**Legal and Fiscal Management**: Knowledge of licensing and regulations. Skill in budgeting, grantswriting, and fundraising. • preparing a financial report • completing quarterly tax forms • conducting a fundraiser	___
___	**Staff Management/ Human Relations**: The ability to hire, supervise, and motivate staff. Skill in team-building. • interviewing a new teacher • helping staff resolve a conflict • conducting a staff meeting • mentoring a new teacher • conducting a performance appraisal • implementing an individualized model of staff development	___
___	**Educational Programming**: The ability to develop and implement a high quality program to meet the educational needs of children. • curriculum planning •arranging space and materials •student assessment	___
___	**Operations/Facilities Management**: The ability to develop policies and procedures to meet state and local regulations pertaining to the health and safety of children. • organizing and maintaining accurate student records • implementing technology systems • food service	___
___	**Marketing and Public Relations**: The ability to communicate the program's philosophy to parents and the community to ensure maximum enrollments. • developing a marketing plan • sponsoring a special event • networking with community agencies • conducting a community needs assessment • writing a parent newsletter	___
___	**Leadership and Advocacy**: The ability to articulate a vision. Commitment to ethical conduct. Knowledge of the legislative process to advocate for children and their families. • guiding board, staff and parents in the development of a mission statement • advocating for children's rights at a community forum	___

We are interested in learning where you received training in the six areas described above. Please indicate the *ONE* type of training that most contributed to your current level of knowledge/skill in each area by checking the corresponding box.

	In-service Workshops	College Courses	On-the-job
Legal and Fiscal Management	☐	☐	☐
Staff Management and Human Relations	☐	☐	☐
Educational Programming	☐	☐	☐
Operations and Facilities Management	☐	☐	☐
Marketing and Public Relations	☐	☐	☐
Leadership and Advocacy	☐	☐	☐

About Directors' Support

In developing your management/leadership skills as a director, which THREE sources of support have you found most helpful?

- ☐ Local directors' group
- ☐ College/university classes
- ☐ Head Start Association
- ☐ Preschool Owners Association
- ☐ Montessori Association
- ☐ Day Care Action Council
- ☐ ILAEYC and local affiliates
- ☐ Local resource & referral agency
- ☐ Current employer
- ☐ Publications (e.g. Child Care Information Exchange)
- ☐ National Association of Child Care Professionals
- ☐ Other: _____

Which of the following areas of support would you as a director find most helpful?

- ☐ Networking with other directors
- ☐ Statewide directors' conference
- ☐ Board development
- ☐ On-site technical assistance
- ☐ Discounts on publications
- ☐ Help with recruitment of new staff
- ☐ Management training
- ☐ Job bank of directors' positions
- ☐ Consultant pool for on-site workshops
- ☐ Mentoring from other directors
- ☐ Directors' newsletter
- ☐ NAEYC accreditation assistance
- ☐ Technological support (e.g. computers)
- ☐ Substitute pool
- ☐ Director support group
- ☐ Other: _____

Do you belong to a directors' support group? Yes ____ No ____ Describe: _____

Do you think there is a need for an organization in Illinois that focuses specifically on the needs of directors? Yes ____ No ____ Why? _____

Think back now to when you first became the director of an early childhood program. Check (√) one statement from each set of statements that best represents your perceptions of your job at that time.

- ☐ I hoped no one would find out how scared I really was.
- ☐ I felt confident and self-assured.
- ☐ I was not prepared for the kinds of issues I encountered.
- ☐ I felt well trained for my administrative position.
- ☐ My expectations for myself were unrealistic.
- ☐ My expectations for myself were realistic.
- ☐ I worried the teachers/parents wouldn't like me.
- ☐ I was confident everyone would like me.

Circle the *ONE* word/phrase that best describes your current job

challenging	creative	stimulating	demanding	predictable
unpredictable	difficult	frustrating	satisfying	boring
enjoyable	routine	stressful	enriching	emotionally draining
exciting	rewarding	independent	powerful	never ending

Do you intend to work as a director for at least three more years? Yes ____ No ____

If you answered no, why? _____

About Your Program

Type of organization: (check only one)

for-profit
___ private proprietary or partnerships
___ chain or corporation (e.g. Kindercare, Children's World)
___ employer sponsored (e.g. Bright Horizons, Corporate/Family Solutions)
non-profit
___ independent or agency affiliated (e.g. YWCA, Hull House)
___ publicly funded Head Start
___ publicly funded federal, state, or local government (e.g. park district)
___ church /temple/place of worship owned or affiliated
___ public school affiliated
___ employer sponsored
___ military

In which county is your program located? _____

Is your program accredited by:
NAEYC? Yes ____ No ____
another professional organization? Yes ____ No ____

About an Illinois Directors' Credential

There are conversations at the state and national level about the development of a directors' credential. Several states have developed their own models. A proposed directors' credential for Illinois would be a voluntary certificate for directors of early childhood programs that would be based on experience and training.

What do you perceive as the benefits of developing a credential?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you. Please return this survey in the pre-paid postage envelope to:

Director Survey
The Early Childhood Professional Development Project
National-Louis University
1000 Capitol Drive
Wheeling, IL 60090
(847) 475-1100, ext. 5562

Appendix D

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Training

1. Share an example of a positive training experience you have had as a director.
2. How do you learn about training opportunities? Who tells you?
3. Where have you received training to help you in your directing role?
4. In general, how satisfied have you been with this training?
5. What types of barriers have made your participation in professional development difficult?
6. What would encourage you to get more training?
7. If you had ten hours each month for your professional development, how would you spend your time?

Support

1. Where do you find support for yourself as a director?
2. What's the likelihood that you would use the following services?

consultant pool	mentoring
hotline	directors' newsletter
on-site technical assistance	annual directors' conference
job placement services	technology assistance
insurance discounts	resource library
discounts on publications	directors' support group

3. What other services would you find helpful?

Director Credential

1. Are you aware of state and national efforts to develop an early childhood director credential?
2. In your opinion, what are the benefits of a director credential?
3. What do you perceive as the drawbacks of a director credential?

Follow-Up

1. We have discussed a variety of topics related to directors' training and support. Is there a topic related to your role as a director that you would like to raise at this time?
2. If you had one minute to inform Illinois decision makers' about your needs as a director, what would you say?

Appendix E

Director Resources Listed by Focus Group Participants

Career Track
Chamber of Commerce
Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children
Chicago MOST
Child Care Information Exchange
Child Care Resource and Referral Services
The Chicago Children's Coalition
Concordia University
    Administrators' Day
    Kindergarten College
Consultants
Day Care Action Council
Department of Human Services
Educational Leadership
Erikson Institute
    Bridge Program
High Scope
ICA
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Illinois Department of Public Aid
Illinois State Board of Education
Insights Conferences
Johnson & Johnson Seminar for Head Start Directors
Journal of Early Childhood Education
Moraine Valley College
National Association of Child Care Professionals
National Association for the Education of Young Children and affiliates
National Black Child Development Institute
    Annual conference
National-Louis University
    Family-Friendly Directors
    Taking Charge of Change Leadership Training
Oakton Community College
    Administration course
Starnet
University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service
Wheelock College
Workshop on Wheels